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THE EDUCATION OF THE BLIND

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CONTENTS

Page

Wallace J. Finch, In Memorium 1

A Handbook For Teachers In Schools for the Blind — *Mary Harper Sewell* 2

The Preschool Blind Child And His Parents — *Eileen Scott* 5

Secondary School Sciences For The Blind — *Dr. Charles A. Bryan* 11

Our Friends Abroad — *Margaret R. Yick* 18

The President's Corner — *Dr. Robert H. Thompson* 22

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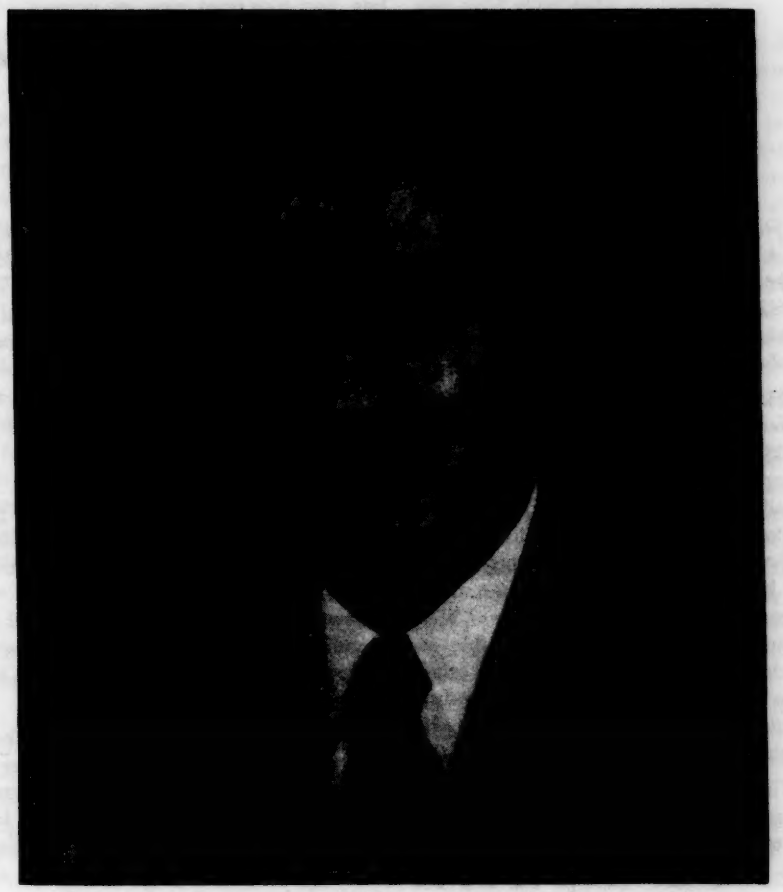


WALLACE J. FINCH

Superintendent Michigan School for the Blind

1945-1956

Death on September 14 cut short the career of one of the field's outstanding leaders in work for the blind. Wally Finch was born in Escanaba, Michigan in 1903 and was a graduate of Northern Michigan College, and Ohio State University where he received his Master's Degree. Principal of the Michigan School for the Deaf and the Alexander Graham Bell School for the Deaf in Cleveland before entering the field for the blind, Mr. Finch took a prominent part in the recent development of the program for the education of deaf-blind children. Superintendent Finch was a past president of the International Council for Exceptional Children and an instructor at Michigan State University in the courses for preparation of teachers in work for the blind.

A Handbook For Teachers In Schools For The Blind

By Mary Harper Sowell, Teacher

Arkansas School for the Blind

So you have decided to become a teacher in a school for the blind? No doubt you have asked yourself many questions concerning the responsibilities of your new position. If so, your interrogations have probably included these thoughts.

How will my actual teaching methods differ from those used to teach sighted children in the public schols? What accomplishments can I expect of the totally blind and partially sighted child in comparison to the child who is perfectly sighted? What will I be expected to teach the blind child besides the specific subject matter that has been assigned to me? What audio and visual aids are available for teaching use in a school for the blind? How can I help my students to become mentally, physically, and socially adjusted to their handicap?

These and other moot questions will be discussed in this handbook for new teachers of the blind.

Your attitude. Perhaps the first and most important question to discuss in a handbook for new teachers is your attitude. How do you feel toward the child who was born blind or who has lost his vision through illness or accident? Do you consider him a freak of nature possessing uncanny senses of touch and hearing which compensate for his lack of sight? Or do you consider him an object of pity to be shielded and protected from life's more unpleasant moments? In either instance, you must change your attitude or change your profession.

The blind child, you must remember, is a child first of all. His blindness should be considered secondary. As a child, he is to be treated as any other human being of his age group and intelligence. But because he is blind, he must have additional help and understanding so that he will be able to accept this limitation and to develop his potentialities to their greatest extent.

The average blind child who has not been coddled and shielded during his preschool years will not expect such treatment from his teachers. He will, in fact, resent any show of pity on your part. He will expect a sympathetic understanding of his handicap and a professional attitude toward helping him to compensate for his lack of vision.

The teacher of the blind child must have a sincere love of children plus a desire to substitute in her students a keen mental insight into situations where their lack of physical vision may prove a hindrance. She must exercise everlasting patience and fortitude in answering the countless everyday questions of the blind child — questions that a sighted child could readily answer for himself.

The blind child is neither more nor less curious than his sighted brother. He is normal in that he wonders about everything in his universe of which he is not fully informed. Since his main receptor of learning is his sense of touch, he uses his hands for the same purpose as his sighted brother uses his eyes. As his teacher, you must accept the fact the he will want to

satisfy his avid curiosity about every object in his schoolroom, including you. This is especially true of a very young child. He will want to see your face, your hair, and your dress. He is pleased when you show him your beads, rings, and bracelets. He is curious as to the style and material of your clothing. It is one of the many responsibilities of the teacher to teach him what he may or may not touch. But any person who has an aversion to being touched by a wondering child has no place in the classroom of a school for the blind, no matter what age group he may teach.

A teacher's attitude is easily sensed by a roomful of children. The fact that they can't see makes the blind children no exception. Since moods spread like wildfire in any classroom, the teacher of blind children cannot keep her attitude to herself. So it is imperative that your attitude be healthy and happy if you are planning to have the proper teaching and learning situations for your school children.

Classroom presentation. In a classroom of a school for the blind, the teacher will find three types of students which she must consider in her presentation of material.

In most classes, more than half of the children have some vision. These children who are partially sighted will have vision ranges from mere light perception to slightly more than 20 over 200 of normal vision. Among the totally blind children, there will be some who were born blind and some who have lost their vision through illness or accident. The latter group will have sight memory. That is, they will remember having seen colors, shapes and forms of objects which they cannot touch, such as trees, tall buildings, and the heavenly bodies.

To the child who has never seen, colors mean nothing. Shapes of foreign objects must be described to him in terms of shapes with which he is already familiar. A teacher of blind children will need many word pictures to give her students a clear understanding of objects and situations outside their experience.

Most classes in schools for the blind are small in size as compared to classes of public school children; therefore, the teacher will be able to give each child in her class individual attention. This individual attention is essential for the teaching of blind children. Each child must be shown individually how to master a new problem. Since chalkboard illustrations are not sufficient media for teaching the blind, the teacher must teach one child at a time until all have understood the new problem. Only then can he discuss it with the class as a whole and plan to go on to a related problem.

Pupil accomplishment. As is true with any group of school children, you cannot expect to keep those in your classroom on the same level of achievement throughout the school year. It is more than probable that they will never reach the same level of accomplishment. The fact that their interests and aptitude levels are different is enough to keep any two children from having the same abilities. An even greater range in accomplishments and abilities exists among blind children than among the sighted.

One of the greatest reasons for these differences, aside from the fact that all differ in mental and chronological age, is the vast differences in experiences. The child who can or has seen has had unlimited experiences which the totally blind child can never imagine.

The age at which a child became blind also has a great influence upon his accomplishments. The older the child was before he lost his sight, the more he is able to draw upon his sight memory for understanding new situations. But the fact that a child has never seen is no reason

to believe that the blind child cannot reach the same high level of achievement expected of his age group. This should serve as a challenge to the teacher to see that her charges have as many experiences and new learning situations as she can successfully crowd into one day's teaching. The more desirable experiences a child can have, whether he is blind or partially sighted, the more he will be able to understand the experiences of others. It is this understanding which enlarges his own personal accomplishments.

What will you teach? If you are teaching in the elementary grades, your textbooks and supplementary readers have been issued for your classroom. If you are a high school instructor, your subject matter has been assigned. But if you are a conscientious teacher of either group, you will soon find that subject matter alone is not enough to give your students the well-rounded education they will need to make them socially adjusted, self-supporting citizens of tomorrow.

Because most of your children are resident students, their school life must also take the place of their home life. As their teacher, you must find the time and a convenient way to integrate into your teaching program such things as the parents would normally teach their children if they could live at home. Some essential subjects to be integrated will include courtesy, cooperation, sportsmanship, and such social etiquette as table manners and personal appearance.

Often a classroom teacher may find it necessary to teach a child how to tie his shoe or to fasten his zipper. Another child may need to learn the directions he will travel in making the rounds of his daily schedule. Still others will need help in problems of physical hygiene. These and other similar situations arise constantly in a school for the blind. The capable teacher can and will find ways to integrate such problems into her daily classroom activities.

Blindisms. Many children who were born blind or who have lost their vision during infancy have developed peculiar mannerisms which are harmful, unsightly, or undesirable otherwise. These mannerisms have been termed 'blindisms' by those who work with blind people. Helping the child to overcome these bad habits and to substitute desirable actions in their stead is another duty of the teacher in a school for the blind.

A very common blindism is a rocking motion of the upper part of the child's body whether he is standing or sitting. This rocking motion is often accompanied by extreme fluttering of the hands or putting the fingers into the eyes. Some children who have light perception wave their fingers before their eyes because they can see shadows and movement. Many totally blind children bow their heads and acquire poor posture. Some wear blank expressions on their faces when they aren't expressing a definite emotion. Other common blindisms include walking with the hands outstreched, shuffling and dragging the feet, mumbling to one's self, grimacing, shutting and blinking the eyes, and working the eyebrows unduly.

These and other behavior patterns which tend to deviate from the accepted normal must be dealt with by the classroom teacher. You should try to understand the reason for the blindism, whether it be a nervous habit or a desire to cover up a frustrated feeling. Usually a discussion with the student about his blindism will create in him a desire to substitute better habits. Then, with a firm guidance program on the part of the teacher, he is able to break the old habit and to form a new desirable one. Getting rid of blindisms does much toward helping the child to become more socially accepted in a sighted world.

The Preschool Blind Child And His Parents

By Eileen Scott

Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Vancouver, British Columbia

The education and training of the young blind child has long been a serious problem to parents, teachers and others concerned with the welfare of the blind. There has been little or no research carried out on the development of blind children because until the rise of retrolental fibroplasia there were too few blind children to permit the drawing of statistically valid conclusions. The task was made more difficult because of the number of variable factors involved (amount of residual vision, age at loss of sight, parental attitudes, etc.) which made it next to impossible to find a homogeneous group of preschool blind children.

In the Province of British Columbia we were unfortunate enough to have a very large number of cases of retrolental fibroplasia in proportion to our population, and these were concentrated in a relatively small geographical area. The Canadian National Institute for the Blind developed a service program to meet the needs of these children and their parents under the direction of a qualified social worker who also had been a primary teacher. A very close association with some 115 blind children and their families over a period of ten years has enabled us to draw some conclusions which we hope will be of interest to you.

We know that blindness does impose certain general limitations on the development of the blind child in the way of mobility, awareness and understanding of his environment, and in his inter-personal relationships. We also know that the extent to which these affect him varies considerably. There are 4 and 5 year-old totally blind children who run, climb trees, and ride bikes, and there are others who just sit and vegetate. Why?

The blind child is first of all a child and every child has the same basic needs which must be met if he is to reach his maximum potential development. He needs to be warm and clean and well fed, but he also needs to know that he is loved and wanted, and to feel that he is an important member of a family. He needs an opportunity to learn to do things for himself, to experience the satisfaction of achievement.

It is generally accepted that the first six years of a child's life are the most important in determining what kind of a person he will become. We believe, therefore, that the best way to help a blind child develop normally is to help his parents form positive attitudes toward him and his blindness. In our experience we have found that most parents need and want such help.

Blindness means more to most people then simply lack of sight. It has tremendous emotional meaning as well. To many people the word "blindness" is associated with darkness, ignorance, evil and sin, whereas sight is associated with light, goodness, knowledge, and happiness. Because of the attitudes of those who see, blind people have for centuries been treated as an inferior minority group, and permitted to play only specific roles in society. The average sighted person thinks of a blind person as a helpless, hopeless object for pity.

Most parents already have these uncomfortable lay attitudes and misconceptions about blindness. When they are told their

child is blind they are threatened by a great many new fears and worries, which are experienced by the parents of any severely handicapped child. There may be fierce anger and resentment — "Why did this have to happen to me? It isn't fair — I don't want to have a blind baby". There may be feelings of shame — that blindness is indicative of a "taint" in the family. There are usually feelings of guilt. Parents tend to think the blindness is a punishment for some real or imaginary transgression committed in the past. Some fathers feel the child's blindness is a reflection on their virility, and the mothers feel they have failed in not producing a perfect child. They all feel personally inadequate to cope with the responsibility of bringing up a blind child. How the parents react to these feelings will determine the way they are going to act and feel toward the blind child.

Parents fall roughly into three groups according to their attitudes:

(a) those parents who can accept the child without reservation and who can consider him first of all as a child. The mother does not dwell on how his blindness affects her, but rather on how she can minimize its effect on him. There are very few parents who achieve this happy relationship with the child.

(b) those who feel two ways about the child. The great majority of parents fall into this group whether their children happen to be blind or sighted. However, parents of blind children tend to have more extreme feelings of love and hate which are harder for them to reconcile. They love the child and hate the blindness. Sometimes the blind child is accepted and other times he is rejected. Their handling is inconsistent and the child is confused by it and, hence, reacts by being difficult. Most parents find it difficult to express negative feelings toward their blind child even though his behavior warrants it.

(c) those who reject the child. There is outright rejection. Relatively few parents will abandon the blind child or actually maltreat him, but there are several disguised forms of rejection.

Overprotection is one of these. When a parent is aware that she wishes she did not have a blind child she feels guilty and wicked, so is forced to take extra special care of the child to prove to herself and others that she is a "good" mother. Such a mother smothers a child with solicitude. He is not permitted to take the ordinary bumps and bangs of childhood and is not given the opportunity to learn from experience. He is kept in a state of enforced dependency on his parents. Other parents may lavish material things on the blind child, e.g., a good nursemaid, expensive toys, fine clothes, but deny him any love and affection. Some parents who feel guilty about their own rejection of the blind child put forth great effort at "working for the blind" — trying to develop "facilities" which an take the responsibility of the blind child off their shoulders.

It should be noted that the circumstances surrounding most cases of retrolental fibroplasia are conducive to maternal rejection. The premature birth of the child is bound to arouse anxiety from the first about its very survival. Long weeks in the incubator are a continuing source of anxiety and disappointment, and possibly of expense. The mother has no opportunity to nurse or fondle the baby until it is around three months of age. Then it is still so small and frail she is apt to be apprehensive about caring for it. Just as she begins to recover from her anxiety she discovers the baby is

blind. It would be understandable if there were more rejection.

Dr. Vita Stein Sommers in her study, "The Influence of Parental Attitudes and Social Environment of the Personality Development of the Adolescent Blind" found definite correlation between the behavior and adjustment of blind children of school age and the attitudes of their parents toward the children. We believe the best way to help the blind child is to help his parents develop good sound attitudes. We should not waste any time, but provide such help as soon as possible.

It becomes obvious that early referrals are one of the keys to success of any program of this kind. Early referrals don't just happen — they must be planned and worked at continuously. In the Province of British Columbia we have had for the past eight years as close to 100% coverage of all preschool blind children as it is possible to get. This is maintained by continual interpretation to ophthalmologists, pediatricians, public health personnel, social welfare agencies, etc., of the need for early referral. This is done by letters, talks, and personal contact with the people concerned. We are now getting our referrals for the most part on the day the diagnosis is made. We can then help the parents form positive attitudes toward the blind child and to provide the necessary support to enable them to function in the best interests of the child before they have time to develop firmly fixed negative attitudes. By the time a blind child is 3 or 4 it is almost too late to change the parents. There is also a point of "no return" in the development of a blind child who has not received adequate love and stimulation. After 4 his chances of developing normally are very poor. Many blind children in homes for mental defectives may have been potentially normal if they had had their needs met in the first few years.

Very early in our program for preschool blind children we established an advisory committee composed of two pediatricians, two ophthalmologists, representatives from the Metropolitan Health Committee, the Child Guidance Clinic, the Vancouver School Board, the School for the Blind, the School of Social Work at the University of B. C.. the parents of blind children, and the C.N.I.B. Board of Directors. The function of this committee is to ensure that the philosophy and general policies of the C.N.I.B. program for preschool blind children is in accord with modern child welfare practice. The individual members also serve as consultants on particular problems related to their individual professions. The members also act as a liaison between their professional groups and the agency.

The specific needs in each family situation determine the type of casework help which is offered. The needs of the parents are considered of paramount importance since their attitudes toward the blind children are so closely related to their own personal needs. No modification of parental attitudes toward the blind children can be hoped for unless the parents are relieved of some of their anxieties. These anxieties may center on the child and his blindness, or they may have to do with the usual stresses and strains which beset the average family, e.g., financial worries, marital problems, difficulty with sighted children, in-law trouble, etc. It is frequently possible to assist parents in resolving many of the problems not connected directly with the blind child. Sometimes it may be through referral to another agency for help, e.g., social assistance in cases of financial need, marital counselling for marital problems, etc. The worker's knowledge and use of community resources is as essential here as in other casework service.

While each child and his family should be considered as individuals, many parents of blind children have common anxieties. The first of these centers on the medical

diagnosis. They are frequently unable to comprehend the information given by the ophthalmologist and are puzzled and confused as well as frightened. They will want specific information about the cause of blindness, the prognosis, whether there is any reasonable hope of cure in the future, whether the condition is a hereditary one, and whether to seek additional medical advice, etc. The parents usually require this re-interpretation by the worker before they can accept the diagnosis. Parents are supported in seeking additional medical advice if they are particularly anxious, since this makes them feel they have done everything possible for the child medically. It is also easier for them to accept the diagnosis of incurable blindness if it is confirmed by a second ophthalmologist.

The second source of anxiety centers around the actual blindness. They require a good deal of reassurance that blindness does not mean mental retardation as is so commonly believed. They need to know what are the actual limitations which blindness imposes, and also what they, as parents, can do to help minimize these limitations. They also need to know what competent blind people can do. They repeatedly request information about what they can expect from the blind child in the future as to independence, accomplishments, employment opportunities, etc.

The worker tries to make the parents feel she is interested in them, sympathetic toward their problem, and anxious to help them. In this way she encourages them to express their feelings of hostility and anger and resentment, and to understand that such feelings are normal under the circumstances. If these negative feelings are not expressed the parents tend to feel guilty about having them and worry about being bad parents. Parents of children with any type of serious handicap tend to have some guilt feelings about the cause of the handicap. The worker reassures the parents that in the case of retrolental fibroplasia the eye condition is not present at birth and is due to post-natal causes, and in other eye conditions that they were due to circumstances beyond the parents' control. If the eye condition is a hereditary one the guilt the parents feel is increased, and they usually wish help in deciding about having additional children. The worker must be skillful at providing adequate reassurance and support, but must guard against making the mother too dependent. Rather, she must encourage her to gradually assume more and more responsibility for making decisions about her own child. The worker should, periodically, acknowledge to the mother that it is a much harder task to bring up a blind child than a sighted one, but always implying that she, the worker, has faith in the mother's ability to do this hard task well. She must be tolerant of the limitations of some parents, realising that they will not all be perfect, but also giving due recognition to those who are making a sincere effort to be better parents.

The third source of anxiety is one that grows naturally out of the second, that is, the reaction of the community to the blind child. Parents are always concerned about what other people will think about the blind children. It is very hard for parents to take the blind child out with them to give him the broad experience he needs for adequate development when it will expose them to the stares and comments of the thoughtless passerby.

The worker provides a safety valve for the parents' hostility and interprets the unhappy experience as being due to ignorance rather than malice toward the child. This is a recurring problem and a difficult one which will not be solved until there is a more general acceptance of the blind. The parents are encouraged to interpret their child's handicap to their friends and acquaintances and thus help in the educating of the public.

The fourth source of parental anxiety involves the actual care and training of the blind child. The parents tend to become discouraged if the child does not compare favorably with the child next door. The worker must understand and be familiar with the normal development and behavior of the sighted child and be able to relate it to the blind child who goes through the same stages of development as does his sighted brother. At two he is apt to be negativistic and as hard to handle as any other two-year-old, but his parents relate his difficulties to his blindness rather than to his stage of development. They need to be assured by the worker that such behavior is normal, and that the annoyance and exasperation they may feel is quite natural. Otherwise, parents are apt to be threatened by their feelings about the child. The worker must be able to recognize whether or not the blind child is retarded in any phase of his development, and if so, to determine whether it is due to faulty handling on the part of his parents, and how this may be remedied. She must be able to help parents accept the fact that a blind child is sometimes slower in learning some skills because of his lack of sight. She should be able to give practical suggestions for handling certain problems, but will also help the parents examine their own handling of the child, and relate it to their problem.

There are two specific points I wish to make here. One is that we have found that the method the mother uses in teaching her child is not important — it is her attitude which counts. A comfortable, relaxed mother who loves her child and believes he can learn to be independent, will have success using her own methods rather than those superimposed by the worker.

The second point is that all children reach certain stages when they are ready to learn a new skill. If the parents take advantage of this natural urge at the right time, the child will develop at very close to the normal rate. For example, babies of 6 to 7 months put everything in their mouths — this is the time to give a cookie or crust to the blind child and to teach him how to find it when he drops it. It paves the way for good eating habits later on.

Since we believe the blind child must be prepared to live in a sighted world, parents are encouraged to help the child participate in as many activities as possible with sighted children. Play equipment in a back yard is a form of "child bait" which will draw sighted companionship for the blind child. Attendance at Sunday School is often the first formal group experience we suggest. We encourage the enrollment of all blind children in sighted kindergartens or play schools at 4½ or 5 whenever they are ready. So far we have had 24 blind children successfully integrated into such groups. Such an experience not only helps the child accept the fact he cannot do all the things the others can, but still can do most of them. It also helps his parents to be more objective and realistic about his blindness.

The fifth common source of anxiety involves making plans for the child's education. Parents require help to accept the need for special arrangements for their blind child whether he may be attending sight saving class, is a day pupil or a residential pupil at a school for the blind. How the parents feel about such a plan will determine the child's whole reaction to school. In B.C. we have found that many parents prefer to move near the school so that their child may live at home. Since such a move involves the whole family and may even mean changing the father's job, it is not something to be done without much careful thought.

The sixth source of anxiety is one experienced by parents whose blind child has an additional handicap. Since the blind-

ness is usually diagnosed first, the parents have barely recovered from that blow when they learn the child is also suffering from cerebral palsy, or some other chronic condition. In such instances we find that blindness becomes the minor problem to the parents and they are much more concerned about the other handicap. Such cases should be referred to appropriate centers for treatment or help and the parents provided with support to enable them to use it constructively, e.g., training for cerebral palsy, institutional care for mentally deficient children, or day classes for such children.

We have found that the establishment of parents' groups under strong supportive leadership is of help to the parents. We have several such groups meeting monthly to hear a speaker, or for discussion meetings. Graduates of this group have formed a very active PTA at the School for the Blind. An annual garden party for all children and mothers provides an opportunity to compare the development of other blind children with that of their own child.

A regular newsletter mailed to all parents keep them posted on material discussed at a meeting, helpful suggestions, reprints of pertinent articles, and news items.

If the integration of the blind child into the sighted world is accepted as a reasonable goal, it is not the parents alone who need to be guided and educated to help the blind child achieve such a goal. No matter how completely the parent accepts this philosophy himself, he cannot retain such a belief if the community as a whole is not willing to accept the blind child and permit him to participate in a wide variety of activities. The preschool worker and the agency have a definite responsibility to do everything possible to convince the community that the blind child should receive understanding, encouragement and an opportunity to become a contributing member of society. The Advisory Committee on Preschool Blind Children has proved most useful in this regard since each member is also active in his or her own professional group and serves as a liaison person to such a group. Talks on the preschool blind children are given to professional groups, business men and women's clubs, church groups, student nurses and social workers, in fact wherever such an opportunity may be found. The film, "Fun Without Sight", which we made, showing 12 preschool blind children at play, is proving worthwhile as a means of convincing the members of such groups that blind children can be much like other children if given the opportunity.

Last year a very successful workshop conference on the blind child was held in Vancouver under the leadership of Dr. Lowenfeld. Out of a registration of over 100, approximately half were parents. Doctors, public health nurses, social workers, teachers from public schools, kindergartens and the school for the blind, and other professional people made up the balance. It proved a very worthwhile undertaking in so far as the parents were concerned and was particularly valuable in promoting greater interest and understanding of the blind child in the community as a whole.

Our program for preschool blind children and their parents is financed jointly by the Provincial Department of Education and the C.N.I.B., a private social agency. We work in the closest cooperation with the school for the blind and the staff there are more than delighted with the results. The beginners whose parents have used the service are eager, enthusiastic and ready for a school experience, far different from the type of beginner five or six years ago. The children are more mobile, more self-confident and relaxed, have a greater fund of general knowledge. In other words they are ready for school.

Secondary School Sciences For The Blind

By Charles A. Bryan

Graduate School, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida

It is the writer's thesis that the blind are entirely educable. Modern 1956 educational philosophy now decrees that, "The blind shall no longer be set apart in school and society, but become an integral part of it." Many city and suburban high schools are now adapting their curricular and teaching facilities to include the blind and sight handicapped, who, after having completed their primary training at resident schools for the blind, are being farmed out to regular high schools for the completion of their education. The social sciences, English, and other languages present few problems of methodology and special techniques for adaption to blind student comprehension. The challenge comes in the sciences.

In the course of teaching sciences to the students of the Baltimore City College, the writer has been faced at different periods with the fascinating problem of how to present subjects in which the visual aids are such a dominating factor.

BIOLOGY

The aims of biology as applied to the blind students include the following:

1. To teach him appreciation of nature by the aid of his senses of touch, taste, smell, and hearing.

2. To present plant and animal forms tactually, and to present microscope topics by means of clay models made by the teacher or by the blind student himself.

3. To specialize in the laboratory in morphological biology, including an intimate study of skeletal forms. To offer some vocational possibilities in biological sciences to the visually handicapped student.

4. To develop the powers of speech, personality, and confidence in public address by calling upon blind students frequently for oral reports and recitations in the classroom. To give special attention to the students' recognition of trees, plants, fruits, flowers, etc., using campus facilities wherever possible. They can collect specimens, run their hands over buds and the bark of trees, and learn to recognize through the sense of smell any flowers or plants that give off characteristic odors.

5. To give them practical work with growing things. Blind students may be permitted to grow some of their own plants in germination bins, where they can keep them under observation from day to day.

6. To help create a love of nature and of living things which will add interest to their more or less circumscribed lives. The hobby aim may be motivated through insect, butterfly, leaf, flower, or animal collections, etc., incentives which will keep them pleasantly occupied in the fresh air.

"Laboratory Exercise". When the class made a drawing of a cell the blind students with the aid of a bright seeing student, reconstructed the bell by making a cardboard cutout or clay model, Braille-labeled. Whenever laboratory work was given, each blind student had beside him a student who had made a special preparation of the lesson and was in a position, with the use of text and laboratory notebooks, to give his companion worthwhile instruction. These student instructors were accelerated members of the class and had had some student teaching experience. They perfected their own technique by having to make demonstrations applicable to the requirements of the blind students. The blind were given as many kinds of living plant forms relating to the lesson

as could be secured for them to study tactually.

In the zoological units of the work in biology, the work covered the animal kingdom from the minute protozoa to the mammals and included the study of live and preserved speciments of each phylum of the animal kingdom. The tactual models were a means of perception. The sponges and the corals were especially interesting to the blind. The starfish, sea-lilies, brittle-stars, basket stars, sand-dollars, sea urchins, and sea-cucumbers were given to them for actual manipulation and touch study. Morphological wonders of nature can be taught easily to blind students, and animals such as these meet their requirements.

The blind students were gradually accustomed to handling clammy, unpleasant material by being asked to feel a tape-worm, a leech, and a liver-fluke. The trained sense of touch of the blind students enable them to make more accurate dissections than average seeing students. Insect study proved intensely interesting to the blind students. They learned their features by running their fingers over them. Crabs, horseshoe crabs, crayfish and a hermit-crab were given them for special study. Live crayfish were particulaly interesting. In the study of the shells, again, the blind students had many opportunities to enjoy work with the different types of shells and shell-fish fossils that the instructor secured.

The vertebrates necessarily presented the ideal work; for with these blind students were able to comprehend every particular. They read from Braille books, or had read to them, some interesting true stories of shark and fish habits, and presented these to the class. The instructor here secured as many skeletal forms of fish, frogs, and birds as possible, using the human skeleton in addition, in order to give them special work in comparative osteology.

The blind students dissected their own frogs with student help from seeing colleagues. Reptile, bird and mammal study was accomplished in the same way, the blind students being given as many specimens as we were able to obtain for their use.

The course culminated in the study of human physiology and hygiene, including work in first aid sponsored by the American Red Cross. Here the blind students specialized in the anatomy of the human skeleton and were required to know the location, shape, and use of all the important bones in the body.

There were debates on heredity versus environment and vivisection, etc., in which the blind students were expected to participate fully. They were supplied with Braille reading material in this type of lesson in order to bring out their argumentative and impromptu speech abilities. Blind students frequently go to the movies just to hear the conversation, and they enjoy biological and science television shows if the narration is good.

Success in teaching the blind will not be determined completely by what the teacher is able to do, but by what the blind student is able to learn and by what actual work he is able to perform in spite of the fact that one of his principal senses is lacking. In other words, the blind student should be "the doer of the act" all the way through his course in biology and nature study. That is, the sense of touch and smell should be used with the sense of hearing.

NATURE STUDY AND BIOLOGY FIELD TRIPS FOR BLIND PUPILS

Field trips in conjunction with nature study, biology, and geology are important enrichment devices if they can be arranged. They constitute an integrating method of instruction, particularly in applying the principles of biology to actual experiences. Field and shore trips are worth while, not only from the standpoint of natural history interest, but there are pleasure and health objectives also for both seeing and sightless pupils.

Blind pupils may readily learn to identify trees by manipulation of the leaves, barks, buds, trunks, stems, seeds; also trees with perfect flowers, such as chestnut, tulip, poplar, etc. Their keen olfactory senses help them to identify plants with characteristic odors such as the spruce, pine, sassafras, fir, persimmon, etc.

The sight-handicapped enjoy a fragrant flower garden, and apparently acquire considerable pleasure from various sweet odors, and the humming of pollinating bees. They like to pick their own fruit, so it is a good idea to help them to tactually identify the common nuts, fruits, tubers, pomes, gourds, etc., and verify their findings first by odor and later by taste. These gardening projects may hardly be undertaken by the blind pupils alone, and usually require careful supervision.

Bird calls are interesting to the blind biology pupil. He can recognize the songs of the various birds. His pleasure is considerably increased, especially if he can name these birds and knows something of their habits. A preliminary study of the songs of birds can start in the classroom where, with a portable or regular phonograph, these excellent records— distributed by the Columbia Talking-Machine Company—can be played: *Bird Calls; A Day With Birds; An Evening With Birds; Birdland Melodies.*

Blind pupils may be taught to identify many birds and animals by their characteristic sounds. The birds may be classified, named, and described according to their seasonal appearances in a particular district; then the blind, with their keen auditory senses, may be asked to listen for them. Some blind pupils do not appear to enjoy this study very much, but it may be made interesting to them. Tactual study of some of the more common birds, using stuffed or live specimens, may be undertaken with type studies of the owl, eagle, duck, chicken, sparrow, sea gull, etc., in order to support field trips and observations which may come later.

Some blind pupils may have opportunities to visit a swamp, lake, or seashore. Marine trips may include tactual obesrvation and collections of marine botanical specimens, including the many kinds of seaweeds. The marine zoological opportunities for tactual study of the invertebrates under a competent instructor include sponges, bryozoans, corals, starfish, sea urchins, sea cucumbers, sand dollars, crayfish, scallops, crabs, shrimp, conches, oysters, clams, whelks, sea squids, etc. The marine vertebrates, suitable for tactual observation, include most fish; however, extreme caution in tactual studies of live rays, stingarees, dog fish, sculpins, etc., should be exercised.

In the zoological gardens, the blind may learn many animal notes, cries, howls, and odors. The splash of the seals and polar bears in the water call for a description of these aquatic mammals. The blind pupils are particularly interested in the rattle of rattlesnakes, and this noise is listened to intently as a protective measure and compared with the chirruping of crickets and locusts.

In General Science tactual observations of fossil plants and animals on geological field trips may be of interest. Crinoids, fossil foraminifera, bryozoans, corals, the fossil Venus flower basket, ostracods, and the shells of pectins, conches, nautiloids, chambered nautilus, fossil bivalves, molluscoida, ammonites, barnacles, and trilobites are tactually interesting to the blind. Vertebrate fossils of many paleontological animals are available in museums, colleges, science academies, and even in some high school collections. Blind resident schools may build up a permanent geological collection of local fossils through kindly donations or field trip findings.

The author's Biology Questionnaire on choice of teaching methodology, given to

seven classes to determine their choice of the most interesting type of lesson, gave first place to field trips, second to teacher demonstrations, and third place to sound movies. The blind pupils indicated the same choices as their seeing confreres. They like field trips too, and don't we all?

CHEMISTRY

Current concepts in the rehabilitation of the handicapped indicate that "the blind are entirely educable," and that the sentimental attitude toward them should be replaced with a philosophy according them a normal place in both school and society. After completing the splendid adaptive training in the resident blind school, they may enter public high schools or colleges and take regular courses on a parity with their seeing colleagues.

The mere fact that a visionless or visually defective student is advised against taking chemistry, may so whet his appetite that he is apt to desire the subject, especially if he wants to be on a par with his sighted associates. Chemistry is an integrating subject usually following physics, biology, and general science.

The first lessons in chemistry deal with definitions of elements, mixtures, and compounds, and the differences between chemical and physical changes. In listing the elements in braille, the blind might have tactual access to metals such as iron, copper, lead, aluminum, mercury, silver, gold, zinc, etc. The blind should necessarily be cautioned repeatedly regarding the danger of testing any substance by taste, or even touch, e.g. sodium, phosphorus, etc., except under explicit direction from the instructor.

The visionless student should learn to differentiate tactually, heavy powder from light, small crystals from large, and degrees of hardness using their fingernails. They should become proficient in detecting odors at a safe distance. They may learn to identify gases, smokes, or fumes with characteristic odors, such as sulphur dioxide, chlorine, and ammonia gas. The blind should be warned never to touch any bottle without being told by the instructor.

The blind need to be literally scared into realizing the danger from acid and alkali burns, and the risks incident to tactile manipulation of phosphorus, potassium, sodium, etc.

The blind can be taught as safety precautions to detect characteristic burning odors such as sulphur, oil, gasoline, carbon disulphide, fuel, gases, benzene, alcohol, protein, and fat, etc.

The sight-handicapped students were given an initial project using blocks, beads, and rings to construct atom and molecule models.

In balancing equations geometrical figure wooden blocks or cutouts may be braille-labeled for the different elements with a number of arms representing the ions or valence. Starting with a simple chemical combination such as water to demonstrate simple replacement reactions, the H cutout circle with its one arm will unite another atom of hydrogen to combine with the oxygen square with its two slotted arms to form H O H. The sodium atom circle cutout with its one right arm may be connected with the chlorine atom represented as a square with one left arm, to form sodium chloride. The blind student might group his element valence blocks according to the ease with which electrons are gained or lost. The blind student should arrange his atomic small and large models into two groups, active or inactive, metallic or nonmetallic respectively depending upon their atomic structure. After the vision defective students have memorized some of the common atomic weights, they might work out by mental arithmetic the molecular weights of simple compounds such as H_2O, CO_2, NaCl, KOH, and write out in braille those requiring simple calculations such as, HNO_3, $CuCO_4$, $CaCO_3$, etc.

Crystalline substances can be made especially meaningful to the blind. The tactual study of minerology and crystallography is especially interesting, if models such as the isomeric, tetragonal, hexagonal, orthorhombic, mono and triclinic, specimens are available. Structurally, crystals such as halite and pyrite may be demonstrated, using a nisomeric model for comparison.

The carbon lessons have some ulititarian values, for the blind can comprehend the ocurrence of carbon through tactual contact with coke, coal, the diamond, and graphite. Factual knowledge of some of the destructive distillation biproducts of coal may be topics for oral reports such as tar, dyes, coal tar antiseptics, coal, gas, hydrocarbon solvents, coke, water, gas, ammonia, etc. The blind should be able to differentiate the three kinds of coal: namely anthracite, bituminous, and peat or cannel coal by feeling, or by determining the varying degrees of hardness.

The metals—zinc, mercury, magnesium aluminum, tin, lead, silver, gold, and platinum with their compounds—will have some tactual, observational, and informative value for the blind. Models or even cutouts of a braille-labelled blast furnace, a bessemer converter, jet propelled engine, etc., may be resorted to as instructional aids in place of diagrams available to the seeing students.

The atom-smasher can be described to the blind students using their auditory sense perceptions. The electrostatic method sounds like a sucession of rifle bullets hitting a target, while the cyclotron sprays atomic bullets like beaded shot from a shotgun. The atomic bullets bombard the uranium placed on the bottom of the atom smasher with 50,000 volts causing bolts of lightning which split the atom, liberating deadly radiation. The sounds involved can be made very meaningful to the blind.

Valence Blocks In the chemistry class, with some blind students present, the teacher was demonstrating simple equations, formulae, and ionization, involving problems of valence. The blind students were particularly perplexed and unable to comprehend these difficult concepts in chemistry; one of them remarked that if he could only manipulate these elements and radicals he could better formulate equations. Their classmates made the observation that perhaps they could fit model blocks together to make formulas which all could understand. This started a project in which the students made cutouts in wood or cardboard, representing the elements with their various valences. The models of elements and radicals comprised geometrical figures; circles, squares, triangles, and rectangles, of various sizes. The geometrical figures carried a varying numbers of arms which were used to differentiate positive and negative ionization. The blocks were braille-labeled for blind students, and colored red and blue to represent litmus reaction for the seeing students. By fitting these blocks together, we were able to construct formulae and equations, including even some simple organic formulae. These blocks were labeled, perfected, and patented; and are on the market today as a device for teaching the fundamentals of chemistry.

Some phases of chemistry may be taught the sight handicapped pupil if simple, tactual, and auditory devices are set up for them. There are very few aims and objectives which can be considered desirable outcomes of chemistry for the blind aside from (1) general interest, (2) knowledge of household or domestic chemicals, in common daily use, and (3) hobbies (mineral—rock collections).

Chemistry tends to be a popular semi-vocational or avocational subject in boys' high schools, and also has some utilitarian domestic science application in girls' high schools also. Should blind students desire to tackle general inorganic chemistry in

spite of their handicaps, the writer believes they can benefit by the attempt, if care is used in presentation. Widely diverse cultural and scientific interests cultivated in the intelligent blind help to motivate satisfactory adjustments in their circumscribed sphere of existence. "And the Lord said, Let there be light and there was light."

PHYSICS

Current educational philosophy suggests that "the blind should no longer be set apart in school and society, but become an integral part of it." Practically, this means that blind students, after completing the unexcelled specialized training in their resident schools, may now be "farmed out" to public secondary schools.

For the sight handicapped, physics offers a distinct challenge to the teacher. Here, special methods, techniques, tactual demonstrations, and braille-labeled models may be adapted to use in both classroom and laboratory.

An awareness of physical phenomena is essential in order that the blind may make satisfactory life adjustments in their circumscribed sphere of existence. Physics, then, is a subject worthy of consideration in evolving a workable content and methodology for blind instructional purposes, with bright seeing students serving as group instructors in the laboratory.

The blind student necessarily reacts to his physical environment. He recognizes an automobile, diesel engine, airplane, steam locomotive, or a jet-propelled engine by sound. He switches on the fan, or heater, tunes the radio, and judges distances by sound. He responds to heat radiated by a stove or hot object so that he avoids actual painful contact. He can feel the wind on his face, hear hissing steam, a kettle boiling, and note how much easier it is to push the piano with the wheels on the legs than to move it without them. He can recoginze friction shown by the sound of squeaking noises in machines, and feel the heating effects of frictional resistance. He can note condensed water on the side of the ice water pitcher, smell gas from the gas range, and tactually recognize the cooling effects of evaporation after a swim or bath. He can get an electric shock when his finger touches a live contact, and feel the radiant heat from an electric bulb. The seesaw, scissors, and the crowbar are understandable as tactual demonstrations of the lever. Through comprehension of such physical phenomena, he gains some valuable knowledge of the circumscribed world about him. The major units of physics, some of which may suggest possible vocations, include light, sound, matter, mechanics, hydrostatics, heat, magnetism, electronics, radio, jet propulsion, etc. These varied topics are ostensibly as important and interesting to the blind students as to the seeing.

Sound Because auditory acuity is one of the blind student's chief assets in his daily environmental contacts, the sound unit should be given detailed attention. The role of sound waves in submarine detection devices using the conduction of sound waves underwater may be demonstrated by reference to swimming underwater while a motorboat is passing. The reflection of sound in the reverberations heard during a thunderstorm is also interesting to the blind in quelling possible innate fears. Good music is appreciated by the blind, many of whom learn to play a musical instrument as a hobby or even as a vocation. The vibrations of sound may be demonstrated by feeling the plucked strings of various stringed instruments. Models impressed in clay and raised linear or embossed diagrams labeled in braille may be used tactually to differentiate types of sound waves. The blind student may synchronize and tune musical instruments, comparing harmonic vibrations with discord. The tuning fork in resonance is meaningful to blind students, as are sympathetic vibrations, which are quickly de-

tected by the astute blind listener. The scientific explanations of differences concerning regular and irregular vibrations with frequency greater or less than 20 vibrations per second is interesting. Pitch, volume, and quality of sound are topics for laboratory experiments. Those sightless students, having a practical knowledge of resonance, have open to them a possible vocation; i.e., piano tuning.

Matter The identifiable properties of matter, such as odor, brittleness, malleability, ductility, tenacity, and hardness may be tactually presented to the blind using sulphur, ammonia, glass, lead, copper wire, steel and carborundum as examples.

Physical Measurements The visionless student should gain accurate concepts of the different units of measurement by handling measuring instruments. He should learn to estimate the length of familiar objects using a meter stick, and units of area as represented by cutout models. To gain concepts of volume, regular objects, such as the sphere, prism, cube, and cylinder should be given to the blind for manipulation.

Pressure The air pressure units with the usual laboratory mercurial or commercial instruments present some perceptual difficulties to the blind. Both force and lift pumps may be demonstrated to the blind by tactual manipulation of model pumps, aided by the teacher or student group leader.

Motion and Energy The unit pertaining to motion and energy is a useful and practical field for the blind. The force, work, energy, and power units represent vital topics within the realm of student comprehension. Energy problems may be referred to comparable topics using tactual model set-ups such as dams and water wheels, thus showing ability to do work. Kinetic energy is demonstrated by throwing a ball; potential energy, by catching a falling ball and then holding it.

Heat The heat unit also has obvious utilitarian value to the blind. Thermometry and the principles of expansion of liquids and solids may be taught if guided by a teacher or group leader. Coefficients of expansion of gases, gas law problems and interpretations of formulae involved are not too difficult for the average blind high school student. He should be tactually familiar with heat conduction and insulation to prevetn possible burn injuries from hot radiators, stoves, electric light bulbs, etc., by tactual reaction, near but not in direct contact.

Recognition of various insulators, as well as the heat conductivity, etc., of various metals, links conductivity with his sense of touch. The blind should recognize proximity to hot objects through their delicate tactile sense and know when not to touch any surface that emanates heat.

Vaporization, condensation, and boiling are natural everyday phenomena, which can be explained to the blind; who may cautiously feel steam rising from a kettle, thus demonstrating both vaporization and condensation. Evaporation may also be tactually presented by placing drops of water, alcohol, and ether on their hands and allowing them to note the comparative cooling effects. A cutout model of a steam or hot water heating plant may be followed by tactual examination of home and school radiators, etc., to terminate the heat unit.

Mechanics Simple mechanical movements may be taught the blind when the apparatus can be felt and results interpreted by tactual observations. The pendulum, gravity, and equilibrium demonstrations with appropriate laboratory exercises are topics that have some application to the blind student's kinesthetic sense. The sightless students are quite apt to have use for simple machines in their daily routine. The lever, inclined plane, wedge, wheel, pulley, and screw can be fully understood

when taught through laboratory experiments and braille reading assignments.

Magnetism, Electricity, and Electronics The principles of magnetism, using bar, horseshoe magnets and the compass, can be taught by tactual observation techniques. They can feel iron filing pattern lines of force with their sensitive fingertip touch. In static electricity, the student may pick up fragments of electrified paper with a vulcanite or ebonite rod. Water running through tubes is a tangible aid to the elementary concepts of electrical units, for we might parallel this topic to the pressure, volume, and resistance of water coming out a faucet. The pressure of water shooting from a fine nozzle can be compared with E. M. F. or voltage, and the amount with current flow or amperage. Tactual aids such as the dry cell may be safely used to make series of parallel connections and to figure out the ohm, ampere, and volt output.

Teaching electrical problems involving reading instruments presents some difficulties; however, bright seeing students may read and interpret the results for the blind group. Electro-magnetism may also be demonstrated by the careful manipulation of a model dynamo, an electric bell, an induction coil, a transformer, or the telegraph, etc.

The blind student should be well versed with insulating surfaces, switch handles or knobs to avoid the dangers of handling modern electrical equipment. Allow them to feel the heat generated by radio tubes, etc., so that they will take the proper precautions in tactual observations. Nuclear physics and atomic fission are modern topics that the blind, no doubt, want to know something about. Tactual models of atoms made from wire loops, and beads, etc., are aids in the teaching of this unit.

The writer realizes that a little knowledge of the sciences may be dangerous, especially to the blind. Nevertheless, sightless persons are brought into daily tactual, auditory, oral, and olfactory contact with the many mechanical and electrical devices necessary to our modern complex civilization, and physics should be the educational bridge to be crossed for their comprehension.

Our Friends Abroad

Margaret R. Yick, Teacher
Overbrook School for the Blind

A visitor to the Overbrook School for the Blind upon entering the rotunda during one of the more leisurely hours of the school day might come upon one of the children making the acquaintance of Louis Braille. A fine white plaster bust of the inventor of the braille system stands behind a brass rail to the left of the door to our auditorium, and very often the students pause to pass their fingers over the long Gascon nose and the toga around the shoulders of their friend. At the right of the steps leading to the assembly hall is the bust of John Milton (I believe that they call him "Uncle Milty"), but it is of Louis Braille that I want to write, for he has played an important role in the school affiliation program which has come to mean much in the school life of teachers and students at Overbrook.

The school with which we are affiliated under the sponsorship of the School Affila-

tion Service of the American Friends' Service Committee is named the Ecole Braille and, appropriately enough as an affiliate of Overbrook, is one of the oldest schools for the blind in France. It is located at St. Mande, a suburb of Paris and offers what would correspond to a general vocational diploma to blind pupils of that area; blind graduates remain after the completion of their course to work in the caning shops and in the basketry shops at the school where they continue to live if they do not return to their homes in the provinces. Great strides are being made abroad at the present time toward the employment of blind graduates in industry with the sighted, also in educating the public to the possibilities of such integration; however, until recently very few were able to leave the sheltered life of the school and family — opportunities were nonexistent. Through the opportunity for service presented by school affiliation, we feel that at Overbrook we have contributed in some small measure to this advance on the Paris front.

In the autumn of 1951, two years after we had eagerly acquiesced in the affiliation plan for Overbrook and the Ecole Braille, but before the activity had gained very much momentum here, there came to us in response to the invitation of our principal, Mr. Josef G. Cauffman, extended through the School Affiliation Service, a recent graduate from our French school.

This French exchange student was Alain Moine, who returned to France with a general vocational certificate to go into a factory making radio parts in preparation for work in a rehabilitation center for the blind which was then in prospect.

From the time he expected to come to America, Alain worked at adapting himself. When he reached Overbrook, he had had only seventeen hours of instruction in the English language, for he had not had the benefit of an academic education in what would correspond to our high school, and foreign languages are not taught at the Ecole Braille. Alain was very quick to learn and eager to avail himself of every opportunity to acquire more English; in every subject he was soon able to hold his own with his classmates. At the machines in the shop, especially, the French boy was very soon adept; no such opportunity exists in French schools or shops, and Alain early made up his mind that he would some day see what he could do to change all that.

This was our first experience as hosts to an exchange student, and at the end of the year, the American Friends' Service Committee and the Overbrook School for the Blind both felt that not only would Alain himself profit more personally from an additional year, but it would be to the advantage of the program also if his stay were lengthened, rather than for him to return home and in the course of time another student were to repeat his experience.

Therefore, permission was obtained from his French sponsors, and Alain joyfully made plans to build a firm structure for future service upon the year's foundation which he had already made an integral part of himself. During this second year he was able as a result of his increased mastery of English to pursue the regular course of study for the general diploma and was proudly graduated in June 1953.

During Alain's stay in America, he made a host of friends, not only at Overbrook and among the blind, but everywhere he went. He was entertained as extensively and received as many invitations to speak as any of the sighted exchange students at surrounding schools here on the eastern seaboard among whom he was so popular. He cemented old friendships and began many new ones at the work camp he participated in during the summer of 1952 at Cherokee, North Carolina and carried back to France with him a modern, true-to-life idea of one type of American Indian and his place in our national life.

Letters, whether written on the typewriter or with a slate and stylus, seemed so inadequate after Alain left us that during

the first winter of his absence from the school, various of his friends formed the habit of getting together to make a "party" tape to approximate more nearly the discussions of the previous two years. With the help of friends at the Quaker Centre, Alain managed to reciprocate periodically, too, so that, although his conversations with us were one-sided, we heard from him fairly regularly. This method has been used satisfactorily in many other schools to enhance affiliations and school activities on both sides of the Atlantic. The School Affiliation Service with its centers in Paris, Darmstadt, Rome and other European cities, has as a regular feature of its equipment to be carried from school to school a tape recorder with which it can make magnetic tapes on the spot for American schools. In schools for the blind, especially, this type of exchange will function in the place of the usual audio aids we all take so for granted in the affiliation of schools for the sighted: pictures, scrap books and print maps.

Exchange of materials and products of class activities can be enjoyed by blind pupils in the same manner that sighted children in nearby schools pore over the picture maps of their foreign friends' schools and towns. We have received a model of a French provincial house from the Ecole Braille, models of French basketry and caning, rush chair seats, and braille maps.

Of course, there have been letters from the various classes to each other and from a few of the teachers which our French classes have translated.

Correspondence is very often what makes affiliation "go," and we have had a certain amount of correspondence between students and teachers which has been helpful; but this aspect of school partnership may be permitted to languish because of a feeling of frustration in the face of the translation and brailling problems. Time is a factor, of course, and if the whole program is in danger of fatal neglect because of the procrastination of teachers and students in the language departments, perhaps supplementary volunteer help may be enlisted to inject new life into an activity which can be most rewarding in all departments of the school. The language departments will not lack for opportunities to do all the translating they can possibly find time for, from English into the foreign language and from the foreign language into English, as well.

The language barrier has been minimized at Overbrook only recently in the history of the affiliation program of our school, and this has been accomplished by enlisting the aid of our Home Teaching Department; University students preparing for careers as home teachers of the adult blind are supplied with volunteer readers, some of whom have come to this country from abroad. Students often require readers who are proficient in foreign languages in order to complete their foreign language studies, and these readers very generously contribute their services to the affiliation program as well by aiding in the translation of letters to our friends abroad.

One spring a huge thermometer hung in our hall, indicating the progress of our drive for funds whereby a sufficient sum was obtained with which to modernize the "talking book" at the French school and to add to their supply of records. Another year we sent a tape recorder and continue to receive the benefits of this exchange in the form of recordings of musical programs and greetings from Paris throughout the school year.

On this tape recording machine our friends are able to hear our Christmas program and our spring concerts. We sent a tape of our dedication ceremony when we unveiled our gift of the bust of Louis Braille. In October 1955 when it was received from France, the pupils who formed the affiliation committee planned an unveiling ceremony as the first of their programs for the year; the French school was

holding its dedication ceremony unveiling the original piece of sculpture at the same time. The French Consul in Philadelphia removed the covering from our bust to the roll of drums in our orchestra, and Mrs. Helen Tomkins, director of French affiliations for the American Friend's Service Committee from Paris spoke to us for our partner school in St. Mande and translated our program for them after her return to France by plane later in the week.

In the spring the French classes presented another program and planned a "French" day, including cheese-topped onion soup for luncheon and a late afternoon gouter champetre (tea on the lawn) under the direction of the French language teacher, Mr. Byron Elder. Pupils of the French classes said the Lord's Prayer and the 23rd Psalm in French during the worship service with which we begin our school day at Overbrook, two invited guests spoke to us of their experiences as exchange teacher and student abroad, and the elementary school sang the "songs for fun" which they had learned in French, ending with *La Marseillaise*.

Although there are many very vigorous affiliations among schools for the sighted, Overbrook is the pioneer among schools for the blind. International interest abroad is evidenced by the attendance at the July conferences planned by the School Affiliation Service. They were held in Holland for a number of years and in Germany last summer; this year everyone is eagerly looking forward to the conference in France. Seminars under the direction of educators from leading teacher-training institutions in England, Switzerland and Germany and workshops with leaders from the United Nations are conducted in three languages. Nearly a hundred participants enjoyed incomparable social experiences as well as study with their colleagues from other lands, visiting a progressive school and many other places of interest for the tourist as well as for the educator.

Schools wishing to have a part in the affiliation program will find the staff at the School Affiliation Service ready and willing to supply them with information and suggestions. A card or letter to the American Friends' Service Committee, 20 South 12th Street, Philadelphia, Pa., may be the first step toward a more abundant life experience for your school. Members of the SAS staff visit American schools and then with the help of foreign staff members work to bring about a friendly relationship with a European school as nearly suited to the American partner as possible.

The same staff members of SAS who were instrumental in bringing about our affiliation and in helping us to establish it on a firm footing brought to the attention of our French school a talented young refugee by the name of Mlle. Haline Rosinska. Mlle. Rosinka had received many prizes and scholarships in art and sculpture. An auxiliary organization of former pupils and friends, the Amis de l'Ecole Braille, commissioned her to execute a bust of the great patron of the blind and founder of their school, and when they learned that their American partner would like to have a bust of Louis Braille, because we already have a very fine one of the American blind-deaf girl, Laura Bridgman, they had Mlle. Rosinska's work copied according to the best French methods for us.

Our visitors today meet this bit of France at the entrance to our auditorium, and we are happy to know that in France Alain is bringing something of Overbrook to the problems of the blind. Herein lie the elements of a true exchange in school affiliation, for we gave him of America, and those who met him here are constantly surprised by the sense of kinship and sympathy with things French we meet when anyone from the Overbrook School for the Blind today who ventures beyond the campus and identifies himself is asked, "Oh, did you know Alain?"

The President's Corner

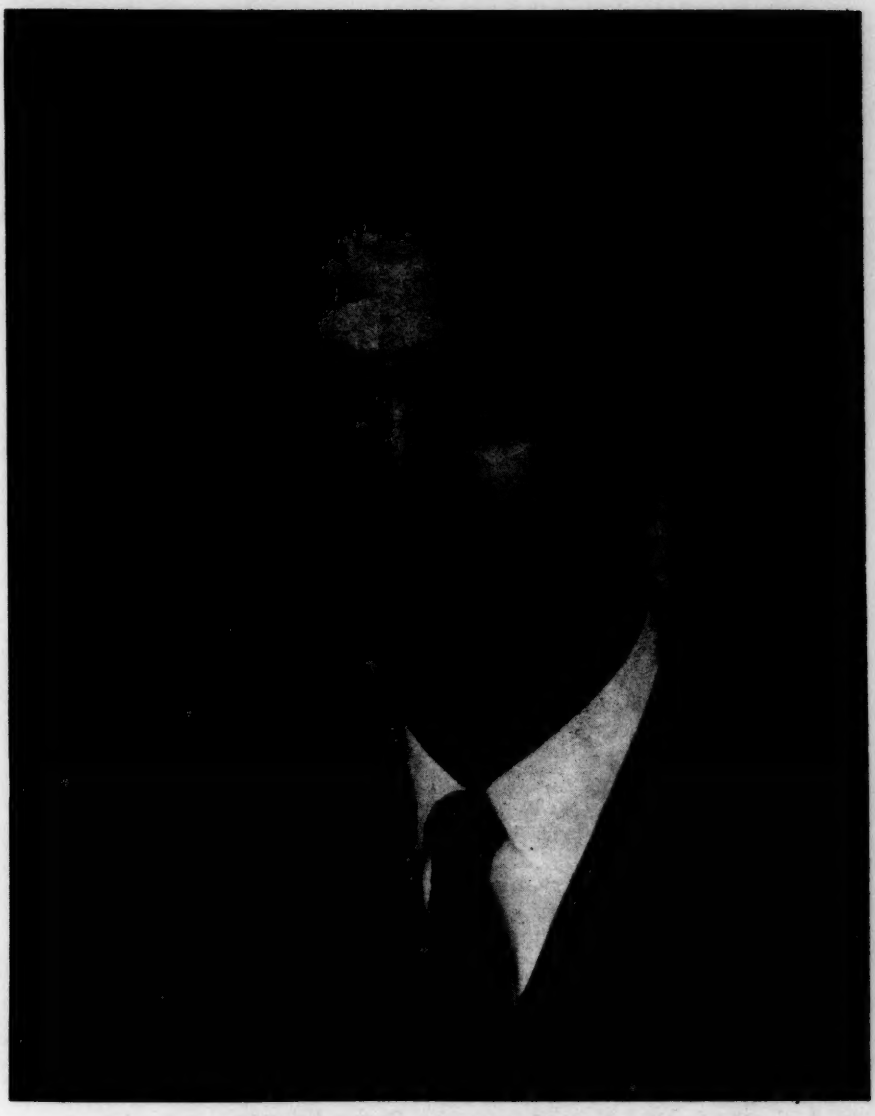
by Dr. Robert H. Thompson, President
American Association of Instructors of the Blind

As incoming President of the American Association of Instructors of the Blind, I have been given an opportunity to submit material for a page, column, or whatever it might be, with the suggestion that it be called "The President's Corner." While it has never been characteristic of me to be kept in a corner, I am mindful that the President of this century old professional organization must be circumspect. I promise the Editor that if I slip out of the corner, I shall attempt to do so with appropriate discretion.

It is a privilege and opportunity to be given regular space in the INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR THE EDUCATION OF THE BLIND. I shall attempt to use this corner to bring before the membership of the AAIB and other readers of this fine magazine an accounting of our efforts as well as the issues and problems we face. Your suggestions for the best use of this corner will be appreciated. I believe that understanding the issues results in increased conviction, deeper loyalty, more purposeful effort and greater achievement.

Many of our members and readers could not attend the Worthington Convention and will not have access to the proceedings of the AAIB. I wish to use my corner for the first time to list my twelve points for progress presented the Association in my inaugural remarks to the convention.

1. The development of a long range planning committee that will be representative of the administrative structure of the AAIB for six to eight years. We have outgrown two-year plans.
2. The AAIB has grown to the extent that it seems wise to investigate the advantages of legal incorporation.
3. Current AAIB income is not adequate to carry on a vigorous program. We must consider the relative merits of further increases in dues, fund-raising appeals, or an annual subsidy from an appropriate foundation.
4. The AAIB should explore the possibility of absorbing the annual subsidy required by the INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR THE EDUCATION OF THE BLIND.
5. A program of teacher recruitment must be worked out. We must strive for greater recognition of the teaching profession, for improved teaching conditions, and for increased salaries.
6. An evaluation instrument is needed whereby a program of education for the young blind can evaluate itself or be evaluated by others. Careful evaluation can improve the effectiveness of our schools and classes.
7. We must plan in the direction of a full-time secretary with a strategically located office. Inexpensive office space and equipment might be available through the APH at Louisville, the AFB in New York, or the NEA at Washington, D. C.
8. We must work as closely as possible with all sister organizations in the belief that when we work together we get to know each other better. Doubts and suspicions of each other will then fall by the wayside.
9. The education of children who are blind is a total program. Education



DR. ROBERT H. THOMPSON

Superintendent Missouri School for the Blind
and
President of the American Association of Instructors of the Blind

by one type of program is not the natural enemy of education by another type of program. If sound administrative principles are observed, there can be no conflict. It is not the *type* of program that counts. Rather, it is what the program *does* that is important. We must put an end to the treatment of the education of children who are blind by different types of programs as though they are entirely unrelated problems.

10. We must work harder for increased membership. There are sources of membership relatively untouched. Every member must be a salesman for AAIB memberships and JOURNAL subscriptions. Some 7,000 families in the United States have children of school age who are blind. These people need what we have to offer. Too few of our members and institutional colleagues have "been selling." An effective AAIB cannot be forged from indifferent members. It is every member's personal responsibility to sell AAIB on its merits. The AAIB can only be what you and I make it.

11. Increased AAIB business means more frequent meetings of an administrative body. The creation of an executive committee with a smaller number of board members would make such meetings less expensive to the Association. Full and regular reports would have to be made to the Board of Directors so it could be effective in its direction and support of the inner board.

12. A vigorous Association means travel costs in excess of what officers of the Association can pay from their own budgets. These expenses should be carried by the Association. Classroom teachers should be able to hold office in our Association. Many do not have expense accounts. If this burden is too heavy for the entire Association, it is no less burdensome to the individuals it charges with responsiblity.

DATES TO REMEMBER

1956

October	15-17—NRA National Conference, Denver, Colorado.
October	20-23—Annual Meeting, Board of Trustees, American Printing House for the Blind, Louisville, Kentucky.

1957

April	23-27—ICEC National Convention, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
July	7-12—AAWB 31st Convention, Chicago, Illinois.
August	2-10—International Conference of Educators of Blind Youth, Oslo, Norway.

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